

Third Time Lucky with Philby

By ANDRE DEUTSCH

CPYRGHT

FIRST met Kim Philby in March 1954, when the firm was about two years old. The meeting was arranged by the late Tommy Harris, an old friend of Nicolas Bentley's. Nick had met Philby earlier, but I knew little about him. He was just back from Washington, having been dismissed from the Foreign Service, and Tommy explained that this was because he had been a friend of Burgess and Maclean. Whatever they had been up to, Philby had had nothing to do with it, but the Foreign Office had naturally to maintain very high standards of security so was taking no risks (this was before Philby's name had been put forward as that of the Third Man—and then cleared).

As I remember it Tommy Harris's line was that, while Philby accepted that the Foreign Office had to act in this way, it was terribly hard luck on an innocent man to have his career cut off like this, in circumstances which would surely make people say "No smoke without fire". Poor Philby needed moral support; he needed proof that even people who weren't his close friends were ready to believe in him. If we were to offer him a contract for a book we would be doing a fine man a good turn, and we might well get a good book into the bargain.

We all had lunch together and Philby impressed me most favourably. He drank a fair amount but held it well; he spoke little, but when he did it was worth hearing; he seemed sad, which was natural, and he seemed very sincere. I liked him a lot.

We agreed on a contract and at his request arranged to pay him so much a month for twelve months and then a final sum when he delivered. I left this lunch in an optimistic mood. I saw us becoming a part of a small-scale Dreyfus case, gaining honour, an agreeable sense of righteousness and no doubt some sterling as well.

Soon after we had signed the contract and started the payments I had another meeting with Philby. This time he looked sadder, a trifle seedy and distraught, and he produced a rather turgid outline. He confessed that he hadn't realised how difficult it was to write a book, and that the going was hard. Although my optimism diminished I hoped

he would overcome this block. But by the spring of 1965, when twelve monthly payments had all been paid, he admitted defeat. He was embarrassed, apologetic, and seemed rather fed up with the whole thing. Tommy Harris came to the rescue and refunded our advance—which, since we knew him to be both quixotic and rich, was not so surprising as it might have been.

That ended our first Philby flirtation.

Second Attempt

The second began in October 1966 when the *Observer* asked if we would be interested in a book by Eleanor Philby (Kim's third wife) and Patrick Seale (their Middle Eastern correspondent). We were asked to handle the foreign rights and raise as much money as possible so that Seale could devote a year to writing the book. I suggested a sizeable advance and immediately talked to an American publisher then in London whose response was most encouraging. "If it's good", he said, "I'll pay forty thousand dollars. Alan Dulles, head of CIA,

told me that of all the spies Russia ever had Philby was the most successful."

Then Seale and Mrs. Philby decided to go to a literary agent, who showed us their outline in March—I was in Australia and a copy was sent to me. After a few telephone conversations with London we decided to make a substantial offer provided we could have a share of second serial rights (it had been agreed that the *Observer* should have first serial rights). It was this, I think, which decided the authors to go to Hamish Hamilton, not us: the Hamilton offer was slightly less, but they were less greedy about participating in serial rights. And perhaps the authors also felt that if there was any trouble with the authorities a publisher belonging to a powerful organisation like Thomson's would have a better chance to fight back (a justifiable consideration: Colonel Lohan had already been on to me warning that the book would be subject to D Notice procedure).

Study In Depth

We were very sore that we'd lost out—until a moment early in September. I was on holiday in Lindos with friends, including Nick Bentley, and a stray guest left behind the current issue of *Newsweek* in

H. A. R.		PHILBY	
1954		Royalties	Rights
Apr 1st	To Cash	5	40
May 1st		8	40
June 1st		11	40
July 1st		13	40
Aug 1st		16	40
Sept 1st		19	40
Oct 1st		22	60
Nov 1st		25	60
Dec 1st		28	60
1955			
Jan 1st	To Cash	32	60
Feb 1st		35	60
Mar 1st		38	60

The advance royalties were paid promptly on the first of the month but no book materialised

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